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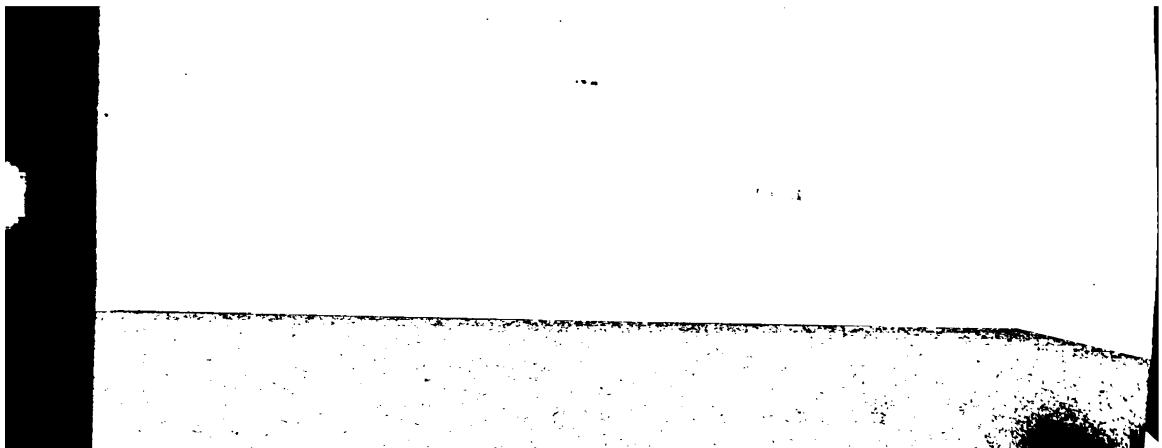

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Not in A
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NORWICH
THE INLAND CITY





THE INLAND CITY

by

EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN

A Poem and a Letter

The Academy Press
April, 1906

M. R.



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FOREWORD

Norwich is proud to claim Edmund Clarence Stedman as an adopted son and he is always ready to do honor to the home of his early youth. He came to Norwich at five years of age and lived with relatives in Norwich Town, attending school here until he was fitted for Yale College and returning at a later period to be the editor of a local newspaper. He has always kept his interest in the town and his friendship for many of its inhabitants.

Some years ago Mr. Stedman was invited to address the Norwich Town Rural Association at its annual meeting. He was unable to be present on that occasion, but wrote a letter of regret, a part of which is given in these pages,

making at the same time a generous contribution to the Association.

"The Inland City" was published in one of Mr. Stedman's early books of poems which is now out of print. Hence its reprint at the press of the Norwich Free Academy is most acceptable and fitting.

M. P. G.



THE LETTER





THE LETTER

"Let me confess that I sat down to write you, just now, — as I have written to several other Arbor Day Committees, — that I am so embarrassed this month with overwork that I must ask you to wait another year for the few words so kindly desired.

"But your letter, a graceful petal from 'The Rose of New England,' calls up memories. On second thought I cannot put off in that way the first request sent me from Old Norwich Town

need not have gone abroad f
and types. Where was ther
a place to rival it, with its
trees and ancient manor house
grant gardens; its dear old la
ting up the front windows of th
houses, but airing, in their
carriage, their more ancient
and their fine old lace; its cur
at 9 P. M.; its burying groun
from the time of William an
its conference-meeting courtsh
elm-bordered green, where gr
needed no cutting, for the cow
the lower end, and we Acade
gave it small chance to grow
the Church and 'Fuller's Str
base-ball and turkey-matches

each one fit to be the wife of a President, far too sweet and good to be sold to any English Duke!

"Old Norwich! where no one ever got very rich, not even Mr. Fuller; where our tailor was a statesman and our shoemaker a philosopher; where, in fact, there was no dull side to the picture, except the long sermons, and a general conviction on the part of the grown-up residents that a funeral was the nicest, as it was the most frequent, kind of an entertainment, and that it was ever so much better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting,—Thanksgiving Day excepted. Mrs. Gaskell's 'Cranford' was not a 'circumstance' to that picturesque town, where I played and studied and dreamed, but most of all ran wild amid its woods and waters, during the ten years of adolescence, which are the longest season of everyone's life.

"Two summers ago I passed a week with our young romancer 'Sidney Luska,' visiting the old town after a quar-

ter of a century's absence. I saw the good work of the Rural Association. So many more trees, so much more trim and trig, yet picturesque. The whole circuit 'around town' through a continuous grove. One had to climb above it to take it all in.

"No one can be born amid such beauty without forming unconsciously a taste for the beautiful; it is the only place that I know of where one could endure the Westminster confession without revision.

"But I had two griefs during my visit. The first, all will comprehend who are familiar with the annals of the Stedman homestead and with those of Yantic cemetery; the other, was the loss of my boyhood's companion, that I had verily thought immortal—I mean the brook which came down by the Scotland road and the present Gulliver place, through the meadow and the hollow in front of Deacon Stedman's house and so on to the Yantic river. I do not know what it was called. I

never asked its name; it used to flow right along without calling summer and winter, and to put on great airs in the spring freshet time. It was to me one of the most live and beautiful things on earth. I used so often to seek its company and follow it up into the woods, and so much of it ran through my uncle's land to the northeast, that I grew to consider it my own brook. There were trout left in it, and often after a rain did I catch a half dozen. I have caught larger ones since, but none worth half so much to me. I know every turn and hole and riffle in that brook. Nobody ventured to utilize it for anything.

"What haunted me in those days as I went mooning along it—what I sought to find—I do not know; but on the first day of my recent visit I went to its banks; I knew what I was looking for; it was nothing less than that which Longfellow has entitled 'My Lost Youth.' Well, the brook was as much gone as my youth, just about

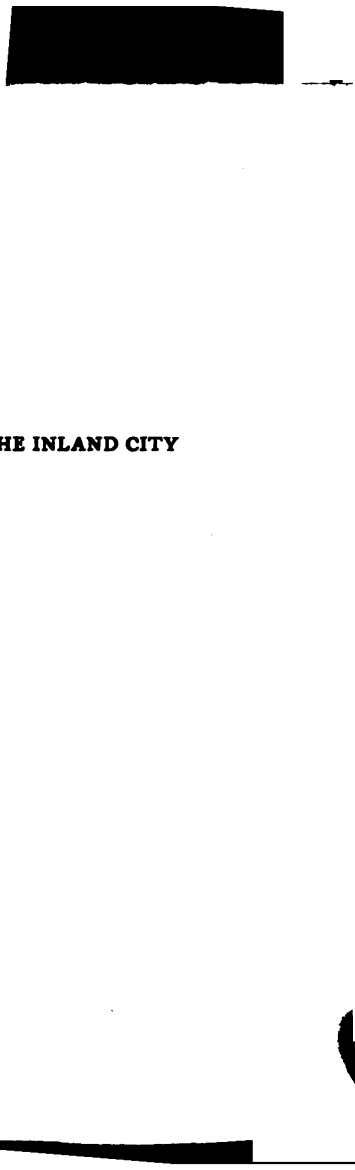
as much ; there was, to be sure, a
trickle glimmering between its n
banks—the stream too tiny an
banks too narrow to be accounte
by the lens of age substituted fo
magnifying eye of boyhood. P
there had been a conspiracy somew
The next morning I followed the
through the meadows and up th
the woods, until at last, away a
farthest boundary of my early ra
I came upon a huge stone dam, i
oning a sparkling mimic lake, an
mystery was solved. Dr. Hal
told of 'the man who stole a m
house.' No man would have
steal my brook. It took a corpor
Yes, there were the names en
upon the brook's prison walls.
actually gloried in their crime !
course it was done by the 'down
ers'—and under the transparent p
of needing water ! In my day
was not a fashionable beverage
'landing'. The cause of temp
doubtless has advanced ; I confess



was room for it; but the old town has lost one of its prettiest features.

"However, the Rural Association has added beauties that make amends for all that I have missed, and I will no longer 'Look before and after, and sigh for what is not.'"





THE INLAND CITY





THE INLAND CITY

(1851)

Guarded by circling streams and wooded mountains,
Like sentinels round a queen,
Dotted with groves and musical with fountains,
The city lies serene.

Not far away the Atlantic tide diverges,
And, up the southern shore
Of gray New England, rolls in shortened surges,
That murmur evermore.

The fairy city! not for frowning castle
Do I extol her name;
Not for the gardens and the domes palatial
Of Oriental fame;

Yet if there be one man who will not rally,
One man, who sayeth not
That of all cities in the Eastern valley
Ours is the fairest spot;

Then let him roam beneath those elms gigantic,
Or idly wander where
Shetucket flows meandering, where Yantic
Leaps through the cloven air,

Gleaming from rock to rock with sunlit motion,
Then slumbering in the cove;
So sinks the soul, from Passion's wild devotion,
To the deep calm of love.

And journey with me to the village olden,
Among whose devious ways
Are mossy mansions, rich with legends golden
Of early forest days;

Elysian time! when by the rippling water,
Or in the woodland groves,
The Indian warrior and the Sachem's daughter
Whispered their artless loves;

Legends of feuds, where Uncas made his transit,
Fierce for the border war,
And drove all day the alien Narragansett
Back to his haunts afar;

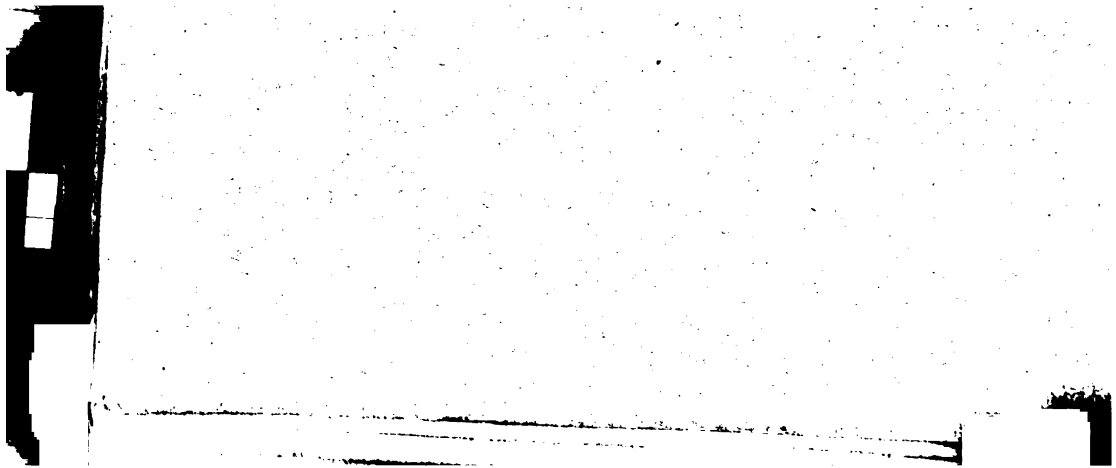
Tales of the after time, when scant and humble
Grew the Mohegan band,
And Tracy, Griswold, Huntington and Trumbull,
Were judges in the land.

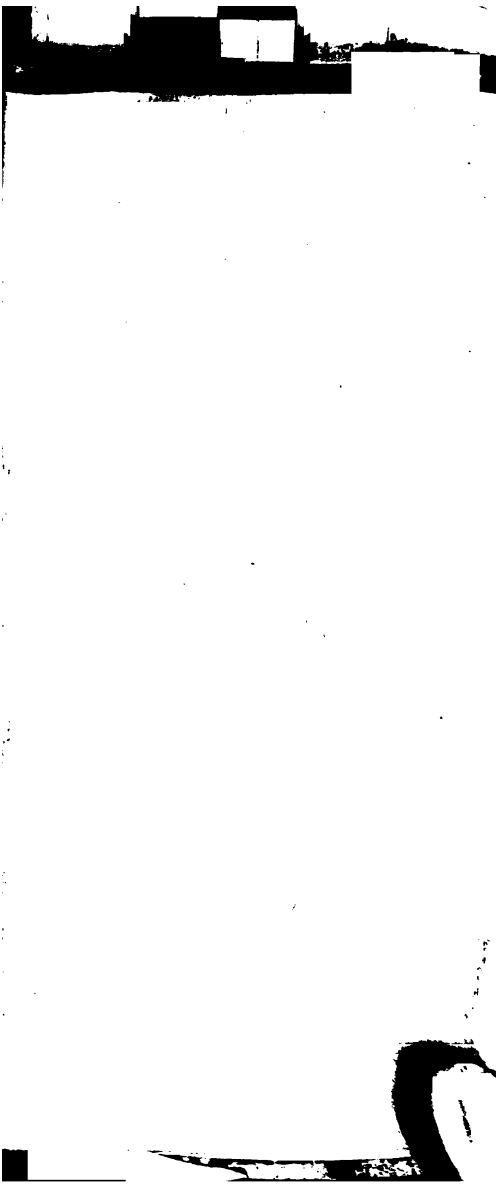
So let the caviler feast on old tradition,
And then at sunset climb
Up yon green hill, where, on his broadened vision
May burst the view sublime!

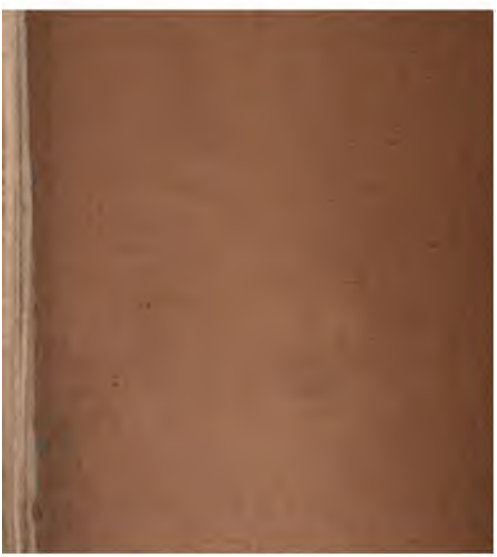
The city spires, with stately power impelling
The soul to look above,
And peaceful homes, in many a rural dwelling,
Lit up with flames of love ;—

And then confess, nor longer idly dally,
While sinks the lingering sun,
That of all cities in the Eastern valley
Ours is the fairest one.











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